

Message Text

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SUBJ: STATE OF PLAY IN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY

SUMMARY: IN THE WAKE OF DRAMATIC COMMUNIST (PCI) GAINS IN THE JUNE 15 LOCAL ELECTIONS, DEBATE IN THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC (DC) PARTY ON HOW TO DEAL WITH THE PCI IS POLARIZING THE PARTY. THE "REFORMERS" LED BY PREMIER MORO AND DRAWING SUPPORT FROM THE PARTY LEFT AND SOME CENTRIST ELEMENTS ADVOCATE THE STRATEGY OF COMPETITIVE DIALOGUE WITH THE PCI - A POLICY WHICH WE BELIEVE WOULD LEAD TO INCREASINGLY OPEN COOPERATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS IN PARLIAMENT. THE MAJORITY OF THE PARTY CENTRISTS AND RIGHT-OF-CENTER ELEMENTS ARE DRAWING TOGETHER IN A "MODERATE" GROUPING WHICH CURRENTLY SUPPORTS DEFENSE MINISTER FORLANI TO REPLACE ZACCAGNINI AS PARTY SECRETARY. THE "MODERATES" TAKE A MORE RESTRICTIVE VIEW ON THE CONTENT OF DC-PCI DIALOGUE AND TEND TO FAVOR RETENTION OF THE POLICY CONFIRMED BY THE LAST DC CONGRESS CALLING FOR "OPPOSITION" TO THE PCI. MODERATE LEADERS, INCLUDING BUDGET MINISTER ANDREOTTI AND DC CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES GROUP LEADER PICCOLI, ARE PUSHING FORLANI TO MOVE TO CAPTURE THE SECRETARYSHIP IN THE NEAR TERM. FORMER PARTY SECRETARY FANFANI, ON THE OTHERHAND, HAS EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT REPLACEMENT OF ZACCAGNINI SHOULD AWAIT A PARTY CONGRESS, TO BE CONVOKED WITHIN 3 OF 4 MONTHS

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AT THE LATEST. FORLANI HIMSELF IS BELIEVED TO FAVOR THIS

MORE GRADUAL APPROACH IN ORDER TO SEEK A WIDER MAJORITY WITHIN THE PARTY POSSIBLY INCLUDING SOME OF THOSE PRESENTLY SUPPORTING MORO. HOWEVER, FORLANI'S HAND MAY BE FORCED IF ZACCAGINI STICKS TO HIS PRESENT PREFERENCE FOR PUTTING OFF THE CONGRESS AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, PERHAPS EVEN UNTIL NEXT AUTUM. IN THAT EVENT, FORLANI MIGHT BE FORCED TO AGREE WITH ANDREOTTI AND PICCOLI THAT ACTION MUST BE TAKEN NOW TO RECAPTURE THE POLITICAL INITIATIVE FOR THE DC PARTY. OTHERWISE, THE DC FACES THE SERIOUS RISK THAT THE JUNE 15 RESULTS WILL BE REPEATED IN IMPORTANT LOCAL ELECTIONS IN MID-1976 AND IN THE CRUCIAL PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION SCHEDULED FOR THE FOLLOWING SPRING.

END SUMMARY.

1. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (DC) IS IN FERMENT OVER THE CRUCIAL QUESTION OF HOW TO RECAPTURE THE POLITICAL INITIATIVE FOLLOWING DRAMATIC COMMUNIST GAINS IN THE JUNE 15 LOCAL ELECTIONS. ALTHOUGH THE SITUATION REMAINS EXTREMELY FLUID, THE SIX TRADITIONAL PARTY FACTIONS ARE TENDING TO BREAK UP AND POLARIZE AROUND LARGER LEFT AND RIGHT GROUPINGS WHOSE BASIC DIFFERENCES CONCERN THE QUESTION OF DC RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNISTS (PCI). FOR WANT OF A MORE PRECISE CHARACTERIZATION, THESE GROUPINGS CAN BE DENOMINATED AS "REFORMERS" AND "MODERATES".

2. ON THE ONE HAND, PREMIER MORO AND HIS LOYAL SUPPORTER, DC SECRETARY ZACCAGNINI LEAD A HETEROGENEOUS "REFORM" GROUPING INCLUDING MOST OF THE TRADITIONAL PARTY LEFT-WING BASE AND FORZE BUOVE FACTIONS AND ELEMENTS OF THE AMORPHOUS, CENTRIST DOROTEO FACTION INCLUDING RUMOR, TAVIANI AND GULLOTTI. ALTHOUGH IT HAS SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES OF OPINION WITHIN ITS RANKS, THIS GROUPING TENDS TO FAVOR MOVING THE DC TO THE LEFT ON THE THEORY THAT ONLY IN THIS WAY CAN IT EFFECTIVELY COMPETE WITH THE COMMUNIST OPPOSITION. THE BATTLE CRY OF THIS GROUPING IS "CONFRONTO" (COMPETITIVE DIALOGUE) WITH THE PCI.

3. THE "CONFRONTO" THESIS IN ESSENCE ASSUMES THAT THE PCI MUST BE MADE TO FACE UP TO ITS "RESPONSIBILITIES" AS A SELF-PROCLAIMED RESPECTER OF THE RULES OF PARLIAMENTARY

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DEMOCRACY. IT MUST BE MADE TO DISCUSS OPENLY WITH THE DC AND THE OTHER GOVERNING MAJORITY PARTIES ITS LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS. ON THE LOCAL LEVEL THIS TAKES THE FORM IN A NUMBER OF AREAS (E.G., LOMBARDY, MARCHE, CAMPANIA) OF JOINTLY ARRIVED AT LEGISLATIVE ACCORDS WITH THE PCI, ALTHOUGH THE COMMUNISTS ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ITSELF. APPLICATION OF THIS STRATEGY AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL WOULD IMPLY INCREASINGLY OPEN AND

COMPREHENSIVE COOPERATION WITH THE PCI IN PARLIAMENT. IN ORDER TO IMPLEMENT THE "CONFRONTO" STRATEGY, THE MORO FORCES ARGUE, THE DC MUST MOVE TO THE LEFT TO MAKE ITSELF MORE ATTRACTIVE TO YOUTH, LABOR AND DISAFFECTED INTELLECTUALS AND THIS SEEK TO EVENTUALLY WIN BACK VOTERS LOST ON ITS LEFT FLANK.

4. THE "MODERATE" GROUPING IS EQUALLY HETEROGENOUS. IT COMPRISES THE RIGHT-OF-CENTER ANDREOTTI FORCES, MOST OF THE CENTRIST DOROTEI AND THE SUPPORTERS OF FANFANI AND FORLANI WHO HAVE REPRESENTED CENTER-RIGHT VIEWS WITHIN THE DC DURING THE PAST FEW YEARS. THE SMALL, BASICALLY CENTRIST GROUP SUPPORTING TREASURY MINISTER COLOMBO NOW OCCUPIES A POSITION MIDWAY BETWEEN THE TWO MAJOR GROUPINGS.

5. THE "MODERATES" SEE THE "CONFRONTO" STRATEGY AS ENVISIONED BY MORO-ZACCAGNINI AS A SLIPPERY SLOPE LEADING TOWARD COMMUNIST INSERTION INTO THE GOVERNING MAJORITY. THE ANDREOTTI FORCES AND THE DOROTE (LED BY LICCOLI AND BISAFILIA) ARE NOW ACTIVELY PUSHING FORLANI TO ASSUME THE LEADERSHIP OF THE "MODERATE" GROUPING AND TO MAKE A MOVE IN THE NEAR FUTURE TO OUST ZACCAGNINI BY MAJORITY VOTE. A PARTY NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING IS EXPECTED IN MID-NOVEMBER, AND "MODERATE" GROUP LEADERS ASSERT THAT 60-70 PERCENT OF THE PARTY WOULD BACK FORLANI IF HE CHOSE TO MAKE HIS MOVE AT THAT TIME. ALTHOUGH FORLANI'S TRADITIONAL PADRINI, FORMER DC SECRETARY FANFANI, IS REPORTEDLY UNHAPPY WITH THE INCREASING INDEPENDENCE AND POWER OF HIS EX-PROTEGE, IT IS BELIEVED THAT HE WOULD FAVOR FORLANI OVER ZACCAGNINI IF IT CAME TO A SHOWDOWN. HOWEVER, FANFANI REPORTEDLY WOULD PREFER TO SEE A CHANGING OF THE GUARD AT A PARTY CONGRESS RATHER THAN IN THE EXPECTED MID-NOVEMBER NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING,
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PROVIDING THAT A CONGRESS CAN BE CONVOKED VERY EARLY IN 1976. FANFANI REPORTEDLY BELIEVES THAT REMOVAL OF ZACCAGNINI BEFORE THE CONGRESS WOULD HAVE A DANGEROUSLY DIVISIVE EFFECT WITHIN THE PARTY.

6. AS USUSAL IN ITALIAN AND, PARTICULARLY, DC POLITICS, THINGS ARE NOT AS SIMPLE AS ORDER OF BATTLE TYPE ANALYSIS WOULD SUGGEST. ALTHOUGH FORLANI DOES APPEAR TO HAVE A MAJORITY AVAILABLE FOR THE ASKING, HE IS APPARENTLY HELD BACK BOTH BY A PERSONAL TENDENCY TOWARD CAUTION AND A DESIRE TO REACH THE PARTY SUMMIT WITH AS LITTLE TRAUMA AND AS WIDE A MAJORITY AS POSSIBLE. IN ADDITION, HE PROBABLY WOULD PREFER NOT TO BE TOO BEHOLDEN TO WOULD-BE KINGMAKERS LIKE PICCOLI AND ANDREOTTI. BY WAITING FOR A GROUND SWELL FROM THE MIDDLE-LEVEL LEADERS TO CARRY HIM

TO THE TOP AT A PARTY CONGRESS, HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO MITIGATE OR AVOID MANY OF THESE PROBLEMS AND EVEN BRING ON BOARD MORO AND SOME DC LEFT-FACTION LEADERS LIKE MINISTERS MARCORA AND DEMITA. HOWEVER, THE PRESSING NEED TO PREPARE THE DC FOR THE IMPORTANT MID-1976 LOCAL ELECTIONS (INVOLVING ONE-QUARTER OF THE ELECTORATE) AND THE CRUCIAL PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR MID-1977 MAY NOT GIVE HIM THE OPTION OF WAITING.

7. EMBASSY SOURCES INCLUDING DC VICE SECRETARY RUFFINI AND CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES SECRETARY GENERAL COSENTINO (STRICTLY PROTECT BOTH) TOLD US OCTOBER 28 THAT THEY BELIEVE FORLANI WILL AGREE TO GO ALONG WITH PICCOLI AND ANDREOTTI IN MOVING INTO THE OPEN WITH A BROAD GROUPING EFFECTIVELY ALLYING THEIR THREE FACTIONS. SHOULD THIS MERGER OCCUR, IT WOULD BE THE PRELUDE TO AN OPEN EFFORT BY FORLANI TO TAKE OVER THE REIGNS OF THE DC PARTY. SHOULD HE SUCCEED, IT CAN BE EXPECTED THAT HE WOULD SEEK TO KEEP THE DC ON A CENTRIST KEEL, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME TRYING TO INJECT A GREATER DEGREE OF ORGANIZATIONAL VIGOR AND A CLARITY OF POLICY WHICH WOULD GIVE THE PARTY A FIGHTING CHANCE TO RECAPTURE THE POLITICAL INITIATIVE. VOLPE

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